



Office of the Inspector General

David R. Shaw, Inspector General

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Salinas Valley State Prison audit reveals problems with state-funded programs and public safety

SACRAMENTO—The Inspector General's audit of Salinas Valley State Prison identified poor oversight of inmate assignments to education and work programs and inadequate safety and security practices. The audit also found that Warden Michael Evans is an effective administrator, but he needs to do more to address staff performance in following prison policies and procedures.

In the report released today, the Inspector General details audit findings and recommendations to address problems in Salinas Valley's operations and programs. The report also summarizes an audit of Evans's performance as warden.

"Warden Evans is a strong, capable leader, and he clearly has the experience to address the challenges facing Salinas Valley State Prison," said Inspector General David Shaw. "Now he must use that experience to ensure his staff consistently follows state requirements, especially when institutional safety and fiscal responsibility are involved."

Specifically, inspectors discovered that Salinas Valley was giving education and work program preference to inmates serving life without the possibility of parole. Eligible inmates can cut their sentences in half when they participate in an education or work program, but lifers are not eligible for this time credit. Extra time served in prison represents a waste of taxpayer dollars. Using cost-per-inmate figures from the 2007–08 fiscal year, every month an inmate remains in prison unnecessarily costs the state about \$3,700.

Inspectors also discovered that academic classes were canceled nearly 40 percent of the time because of teacher absences, security threats, or other reasons. For the last fiscal year, the average education cost per inmate was \$6,041. With classes in session only 60 percent of the time, the average inmate will take 20 months to receive the equivalent of one year's instruction—increasing the annual per-inmate cost to \$10,068.

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Besides education and work program problems, inspectors noted that the warden must enforce laws and policies governing prison safety and security. For instance, correctional officers rarely completed the required six daily cell searches, and many officers who work at armed posts did not demonstrate quarterly weapons proficiency, as state law and regulations require. These skills are critical for protecting prison employees, inmates, and the surrounding community if an officer must use deadly force.

“In order to protect public safety and taxpayer dollars, it is essential that Salinas Valley achieve compliance in these areas,” said Inspector General Shaw. “I hope that Warden Evans and his managers and staff make every effort to follow all—not most—of the required policies and regulations.”

On reviewing the audit report, Warden Evans showed great concern for his prison and his staff, and he committed himself to addressing the findings and recommendations. The Inspector General will review the prison’s progress in a follow-up report.

The entire audit report may be viewed and downloaded from the Office of the Inspector General’s Web site at <http://www.oig.ca.gov/>.

The Office of the Inspector General is an independent state agency responsible for oversight of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The office carries out its mission by conducting audits, special reviews, and investigations of the department to uncover criminal conduct, administrative wrongdoing, poor management practices, waste, fraud, and other abuses by staff, supervisors, and management. The Office of the Inspector General conducted this audit under the authority provided in California Penal Code section 6126.

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